



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Beth Draeger, RDN, CD, CBE  
Public Health Nutrition Supervisor  
715-839-4718  
[Elizabeth.draeger@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:Elizabeth.draeger@co.eau-claire.wi.us)

### **Families Encouraged to Take Small Steps Together to Live Healthier** *September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month*

**Eau Claire, WI-September 22, 2015-** As parents, grandparents or caregivers, we all want to do what is best for the children in our lives. It can be so easy to give in to that sweet treat or extra TV time that children may want. Every once in a while this doesn't seem to be a problem for children; however, when this becomes the norm for a child it can lead to serious long term health effects. The Eau Claire City County Health Department strongly promotes the efforts being done throughout the month of September for Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and encourages families to work on making healthy changes together.

One in 3 children in the United States is overweight or obese. 29% of Eau Claire County children age 2–5 in enrolled in the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program are overweight or obese, in comparison to 31% statewide. Childhood obesity puts kids at risk for health problems that were once seen only in adults like: type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. There are also psychological effects; obese children are more prone to low self-esteem, negative body image and depression. In the 2015 Eau Claire Community Health Assessment, residents identified obesity as one of the top health concerns in our community.

The good news is that childhood obesity can be prevented. "Focusing on healthy eating when children are young can help to set them on a healthy path for life," says Beth Draeger, Public Health Nutrition Supervisor at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department. "Making small changes in your home can help make big changes for your child and your family as a whole."

Here are some small steps that your family can try this week to make your lives healthier:

- **Make healthy meals:** Buy and serve more vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain foods.
- **Get active outside:** Walk around the neighborhood, go on a bike ride or play basketball at the park. Children need 60 minutes of play with moderate to vigorous activity every day to grow up to a healthy weight.
- **Limit screen time:** Keep screen time (time spent on the computer, watching TV, or playing video games) to 2 hours or less a day.
- **Keep healthy foods in reach:** Buy healthy foods and keep them in a place that allows them to be easy snacks for children.

Making changes to your family's habits can be tough. However, taking small steps as a family can help your child stay at a healthy weight and help them to live longer and healthier lives. Isn't a long healthy life something we all want for the children in our life?

For more information on Childhood Obesity Prevention Month visit: [www.healthierkidsbrighterfutures.org](http://www.healthierkidsbrighterfutures.org).

###